

FOOD IMPERIALISM AND AFRICAN DIPLOMACY IN THE 1980s *

By

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The roots of the present food shortage in Africa and the politics of food goes back to the 1490s when the organized depopulation of Africa and the export of African labour to the Americans, Europe and the Caribbean began. The hunt for slaves increasingly brought disruptive violence and death into African agriculture and African food trade, reaching intense proportions in the period 1550 to 1850. Agricultural practices like bush clearing, tree felling, digging, sowing, weeding, harvesting and food processing all of which required adequate labour at the right climatic moment *were increasingly denied adequate labour continuously for over three hundred years*. This labour, or that part of it which survived the brutal economy and politics of slave shipping, was transferred to be productive in the plantations of Jamaica, Brazil, the United States, etc.. Easily the largest number of Africans, 3.5 million, were deported to Brazil (1).

This violent invasion of African agriculture assumed domestic residence in the form of domestic colonial slavery in Africa after the 1880 with the territorial colonization of Africa. Wars of political control continued the disruption of African production and agricultural husbandry. In settler colonies such as Kenya, Mozambique, Algeria, Angola, Zimbabwe and South Africa, there was often organized robbery of African livestock and land by Europeans in order to start their stock and land holdings. In Zimbabwe, for example between October 1893 and March 1896, between 100,000 and 200,000 cattle were seized from the Ndebele by the British South Africa Company and white settlers. In the 1950s white settlers also reaped the benefits of robbing Africans of their land:

«The Gold Storage Commission... was buying African cattle at knock-down prices during the dry season when the owners lacked pasture for the animals. The cattle were then passed to European farmers who were paid handsomely for fattening the cattle for slaughter.» (2)

In more primitive forms of colonial exploitation of natural resources such as rubber collection in the Congo, or requisitioning Ivory, whole communities were brutalized into going into the bushes to collect rubber and carry it and other items like ivory as portage on their heads. In the Congo the penalty of not collecting enough rubber included getting one's hands cut off. Thousands were left to die of exhaustion, starvation and disease on portage routes from the hinterland to the coast. In East and Central Africa populations were disseminated by exertions and brutalization in railway and road constructions. Writes General Hilaire, on time supreme military commander in French Equatorial Africa:

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«For some five or six years, the cruel problem of native labour has led to disastrous solution, that of the intensive depletion – yet again! – of a population already sadly decimated by drastic cuts enforced blindly on its weakest elements, over the 500 kilometers of these homicidal construction sites! – After the Bakango, the Loango, the Kreche, the Gabonese, the Souma, the Dagba, Baya, Yacoma, and others... have been successively decimated, some of them even exterminated by the prison of the 'machine' – as, in their language of fear, they call the deadly labour on the railway line.» (3)

The cumulative impact of another one hundred years of *domestic African colonial slavery* by the colonial state and other forms of labour exploitation, deepened the disintegration, decay, and under-development of African agriculture, and the African food sector.

An international imbalance emerged therefore in which on the one hand African labour exported to the Americans and the Caribbean generated the development of an agricultural civilization and growth based on plantation agriculture, while on the other hand African agriculture decayed. This imbalance was also deepened by the distortion of African agriculture in non-settler areas of Africa into producing industrial crops like sisal, cotton, cocoa, coffee, tea, groundnuts for export to Europe. The industrial use of slave labour and of exported colonial crops also industrialized American and European agriculture and the industrial processing of new forms of food.

<i>Production of Selected Food Items</i>			
	Hen eggs	1976 (,000 metric tons)– Poultry meat	Cow milk
Algeria	14.5	38	–
Sudan	20.8	13	866
Egypt	71.8	88	655
Nigeria	119.7	64	316
Ivory Coast	4.9	11	5
Mozambique	8.8	16	60
Japan	1,859.4	978.6	5,736.6

Source: 1. *The Middle East and North Africa 1978–79.*

2. *Africa South of the Sahara 1979–80.*

3. *The Europa Year Book 1979: A World Survey*, pp. 636–7.

The consequences of over four hundred years of the disintegration and decay of African agriculture are today several. They include

1. low population in a vast African land mass (unlike China or India which did not experience such massive population deportation as Africa),
2. low level of agricultural technology as a result of the arrest of industrial development in Africa,
3. low level of use of new sources of energy such as electricity or petrol in African peasant production and food processing,
4. low level of production of crops, and livestock,

5. high level of malnutrition and under-nourishment, and therefore high level of disease,

6. African land hunger in Zimbabwe, South Africa and Namibia.

There is a dynamic relationship between these characteristics, all converging on the condition of low levels of food production and consumption *per capita*. In 1976, for example, Japan produced more hen eggs, poultry meat, and cow milk than Algeria, Sudan, Egypt, Nigeria, Ivory Coast, and Mozambique combined (see Table). This low level of production also contains within it a peculiar distortion in which cereals and rootcrops-production attain higher levels of development than that of fresh fruits, processed fruits, vegetables, beans and pulses, mushrooms, spices and animal products. With slavery and colonization, it is as if the very act of survival became increasingly predicated on spending scarce labour on cereals and rootcrops, and beans/peas and on least articulation of the livestock, fruit and vegetable sector of peasant agriculture (4). In any case colonialism, and slavery before it, systematically excluded the African food sector from export into the international markets. Africa therefore was denied its historic duty, bestowed upon it by the logic of soils and climate, of feeding other populations in different climates with such food items as tropical fruits, tropical spices, tropical mushrooms and fungi, millet, yam etc., and earning from it. It is only in settler colonies like Algeria, South Africa, Angola that white settlers had European food markets opened to them for the sale of such fruits as grapes, apples, peaches, and vegetables and livestock products like cheese and butter.

This colonial trade embargo imposed on the peasant sector of African agriculture was buttressed by a policy of not only continually extracting earnings from the peasants in the form of taxes and low prices for cash-crops and wages, but also of not *investing capital in peasant agriculture*. The volume of funds, subsidies, and prices paid to white settler farmers by the colonial state in Kenya or the Rhodesias were not given to African farmers in any colony. Instead, in colonies like Kenya, Botswana, Angola, Mozambique, Northern Rhodesia, South Africa, Namibia, Lesotho and Swaziland, the colonial states forced African labour out of peasant agriculture to work in mines in the Belgian Congo, South Africa, and the Rhodesias. In 1956 alone 600,000 Africans in Angola were contracted for labour, 160,000 of whom were exported by the Portuguese colonial government to Rhodesia and Namibia. In the 1960s Mozambique exported between 80,000 to 100,000 Africans to the Transvaal mines, and another 100,000 to Rhodesia (5). Little wonder that the level of food production is so low in Mozambique today. The high level of state transfer of income from the state into the hands of farmers that has characterized American agriculture, especially after World War II, is a far cry from the peasant African condition under colonialism.

FOOD IMPERIALISM IN AFRICA

The scenario sketched above opens the curtain onto the pathetic drama of the political independence of the malnourished, underfed, and the starving millions in Africa. For the shell of political state power rests on

the stems of seedless millet wilted by drought; on stringy roots of sweet potatoes from stony soils off the edges of white settler farms; on the coarse leaves of wild vegetables salvaged from between thorns and wild elephant grasses and the jaws of picknicking pests. Moreover the newly independent political authorities inherited thousands of its population already urbanized and *dependent on foods imported from* external economies, and an elite whose frail and brutalized egos now yearned to manifest the depth of their degradation and humiliation by imitating the diets of their white humiliators. Thus, for example, mangoes, pawpaws, and black-fruit, were often defined by this elite as barbaric non-fruits because they are not apples and peaches and pears (6). Canned and heavily chemicalized tinned fruits and vegetables are often preferred to fresh African vegetables from the market woman. Dignitaries wearing slogans of independence, sit down to begin meals with chemical soups imported from Europe, and finish their meals with imported plastic jellies (for desert), and would see *pepper-soup* and *kunnu* in State Hotels as subversive insults to national dignity and «international standards». (We have here therefore the *stomach-bourgeoisie* who acts as the bridgehead for food imperialism.) Their role is made the much easier by the inability of peasant agriculture, crippled by over four hundred years of invasion, to feed both the organized population and the peasant population; although the undernourishment of the peasant population does not make political news.

This food weakness of Africa seems to have preoccupied the founders of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), for it is stated in Article II subsection 2 (d) of the Charter that, among other things, the member states shall co-ordinate and harmonize their general policies in «Health, sanitation and *nutritional* cooperation». In Articles 20 and 21, it is stated that a specialized commission made of relevant ministers will be appointed to undertake this task. It is significant therefore that food was an integral part of African strategic thinking from the very beginning of collective African diplomacy. What is missing from the Charter is any mention of the problem of food imperialism.

Yet this phenomenon relates directly to Article II subsection I (b and c) which states that the purpose of the OAU will include the coordination and intensification of collaboration and efforts «to achieve a better life for the peoples of Africa», and to defend, sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence. Food imperialism threatens and negates the realization of both goals.

The roots of food imperialism are traceable to the simultaneous decay of African agriculture and the growth of North American and European agriculture under slavery and colonialism. The development of these agricultural systems has brought forth huge capacities for production well beyond the abilities of internal markets to absorb their products. Concurrently with this expansion in production especially of grains has emerged the monopolization of internal buying and external marketing of surplus by a few transnational corporations:

«A number of different countries have surpluses of oil, or bauxite, or iron ore. But grain surpluses are found in only a handful of nations, and the United States is always one of them. Iowa raises one-tenth of all the corn of the planet, and Kansas and South Dakota produce more wheat than all of Australia. American farmers are connected to Asians, Europeans, Africans and South Americans by a moving belt of grain» (7).

Between 1971 and 1975 the United States' earnings from agricultural exports increased from 7.7 billion dollars to 21.3 billion dollars. Behind these earnings were transnationals like CARGILL INC, with a total in 1978 of 14,500 employees worldwide, 140 subsidiaries in 36 countries, owning 14 ocean vessels, and sold grain worth 11.6 billion dollars (8). The monopolistic character of these transnational companies is suggested by another commentator thus:

«CASTLE & COOKE is a US \$ 1.3 billion TNC which produces and markets food products primarily under the brand names of DOLE, BUMBLE BEE, ROYAL ALASKAN and BUD OF CALIFORNIA. This corporation is one of the four giants which dominate the multibillion banana industry in the world. UNITED BRAND (formerly) UNITED FRUIT – CHIQUITA – is the largest banana oligopoly, with 35 % control of the world market, followed by CASTLE & COOKE, which is the world's largest pineapple producer and distributor of canned fruits and vegetables, with 10 %. These three corporations alone control, therefore, 70 % of the U.S. \$ 2.5 billion banana trade. A fourth oligopoly is Japanese-owned SUMITOMO, which is involved not only in agribusiness but also in banking and heavy industry» (9).

Side by side with these grain, fruit and vegetable transnationals are another set of companies that manufacture farm-chemicals, farm machinery, hybrid-seeds; millers, restaurant equipment, sellers retail, food chains, and banks. The one sells grain and the other sells «equipment», and their interests may intersect or diverge. For example in the 1960s the American government collaborated with American grain companies to induce countries in Asia «to establish... poultry industries, baking industries, cattle-fattening yards, and fast-food chains», so that they would buy American grains (10). A transnational that sells grain may decide to make more profit selling seeds instead. It will therefore focus its energy on getting other countries to abandon seeds indigenous to their ecologies and adopting its new hybrid seeds. These seeds have been genetically manipulated in such a way that one cannot use its harvest for next season's seeds because they will produce drastically lower yields. To sustain their existing levels of production therefore these countries will have to continue buying new seeds. Moreover the seeds are also manipulated in such a way that for them

to be optimally high yielding a certain level of fertilizers and/or irrigation will have to be applied. The seed is therefore integrated to other industrial exports from the American economy or that of the transnational corporations.

It is against these enormous monopolizers of food grains, processed foods, and food processing equipment and food production technology that African agriculture is posed. It is a relationship of profound imbalance and tension. And several consequences may follow. One such consequence is that of further blockage of the internal possibilities of growth of peasant agriculture by the transnationals capturing the urban and even semi-urban markets, through the use of advertisement to change the consumption drives and habits of urbanized Africans. An example is that of more and more urban groups drinking Coca Cola, Fanta, Sprite, or beer to quench thirst rather than *fura* or *palm wine*. Another is elites linking status with the consumption of rice instead of yam, plantain or gari, thereby exporting their incomes to where the rice is imported from. This denial of urban income to the peasant food sector further deepens the food crisis by blocking possibilities of expansion and reinvestment of earnings into new tools of production, etc...

Another consequence is the emergence of the competition between the transnationals and peasant producers for agricultural land, and labour. This may take the form of the colonization of vast tracts of land (as BUD has done in Senegal) or in sheltering behind joint-ventures with the State and local *tief-pradores*. Under these conditions of alliance with State officials and leaders, severe distortions and diversions of agricultural potential may take place. One such distortion could be the adoption of *imported* poultry, dairy and beef cattle operations which would be fed on *imported* grains and feeds thereby inhibiting investment in the improvement of indigenous poultry and livestock and denying a market for local feeds like sorghum or local fish meals. In Iran in the early 1970s this distortion was assured by the Government signing an agreement to:

«allow seven U.S. specialists into its Ministry of Agriculture 'to help establish government policies and influence the performance of the Ministry of Agriculture for years to come'» (11).

Transnationals are notoriously unmindful of the national goals and interests of States for they are committed fundamentally to profit targets set by the Head Office. In their direct use of land therefore they are likely to balkanize land in favour of crops required for markets where maximum profits can be made. Sugar cane or bananas would be favoured instead of yam, for example, because the market for yam is limited in New York and Geneva, even though vast in Kano City or Onitsha with lower purchasing power. In Senegal and Cameroun BUD and DOLE are using land to grow vegetables and pineapples for export to Europe. Both BUD and DOLE have preempted even the use of these lands by Senegalese and Camerounian small farmers to produce these same crops for export to the same markets for incomes for themselves thereby generating a more generalized momentum of development and growth in incomes.

The weakness of African agriculture at the continental level against the TNCS lies in the balkanization of African policy arenas within States while the TNCS have a global and Trans-African vision. This enhances the ability of the TNCS to distort agriculture in Africa on a continental scale. LONRHO for example had sugar factories in Malawi and Mauritius in the early 1960s, and set up a 12,000 acre irrigated sugar scheme in Ivory Coast in 1971 and other schemes in the Sudan in 1976/77. While LONRHO was aware of each of these operations and their implications, each African government was acting in isolated ignorance and philistine national chauvinism and in disregard for the interests of an integrated Pan African agriculture. If one then adds onto this picture inter-TNC rivalries, the picture looms of a new scramble for African Agriculture by the TNCS (12). The scramble for and taking away of African land from producing food for local consumption will be reminiscent of the scramble for Africans during slavery for export and not for the internal production of food. And herein lies the profound conflict between the purposes of the OAU's own charter of commitment to the well-being of the peoples of Africa, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the activities of the TNCS on African agriculture. For the expropriation of land by a TNC for the growing of tomatoes or sugar cane, when the people are starving for lack of yam, millet, sorghum or rice constitutes a profound lack of territorial integrity and independence.

The deepening of the African food crisis can only lead to greater diplomatic weakness on the international level. Already as early as 1975 KISSINGER may have initiated into Africa the politics of destabilization of food crisis. In that year food riots in Cairo preceded an offer of 100,000 tons of wheat to SADAT on condition that he goes along with peace accord between Egypt and Israel. The consequences of SADAT's acquiescence have profoundly weakened Arab solidarity and divided African diplomacy between countries like Sudan, Somalia and Morocco that openly support Sadat and Libya and Algeria that reject the accord with contempt and vehemence. In the Horn of Africa Somalia is burdened with about a million refugees which both she and Africa are unable to feed. It is to be noted that the Somalis were itched into war with American arms. Food has thereby been militarized in Somalian thinking as a weapon for fighting for and salvaging from starvation its dream of a Greater Somali community. In the circumstances, it is not altogether implausible that Somali leaders would not be vulnerable to suggestions of matching the apparent security of playing host to American military bases with obtaining American food aid for the refugees. The establishment of the military bases as much as the refugees will make the Somali shores of the Indian Ocean not a zone of peace as the Havana Summit of Non-Aligned nations urged for but a smoldering dynamite. Could it be possible that this scenario of starting with arming the Somalis against Ethiopia and ending up with military bases in Somali may have been simulated in computer programmes drawn up as early as the 1967 Arab-Israeli war?

The emergence of Africa as an Organization of African Food Begging States (OAFBS) with its agriculture balkanized by TNCS would lead to profound vulnerability and the loss of the OAU as a possible area for an African diplomatic force, as a sub-system within Asia, Latin America and Africa constituting a «Third Force». In its place will emerge the kind of weakness in Latin America that made Brazil turn to the United Nations as the only arena within which she could mobilize opinion and diplomatic initiative against the United States because Latin American countries were so severely morgaged to the U.S.:

«The possibility of effective reforms accomplished through the OAS was discounted because of American preponderance in that body and the hemisphere, making the OAS an unfit body in which to resolve problems where American interests were really threatened» (13).

Already Goukoni WEDDEYE in Chad has complained that the OAU is now against his country's announced merger with Libya because French interests are threatened and France has sent out instructions to the OAU (14). With rice riots leading to the ousting of the TOLBERT regime in Liberia, shaking Siaka STEVENS regime in Sierra Leone; bedevilling relations between the Legislature and the Government in Nigeria and closing one university; or shortage of bread rocking the Government of Zaire as early as 1967, it is easy to see that whoever controls the African swallows will dictate the African speeches too. This will be the more so if more and more African states accumulate debts from the so-called «food aids» from the United States, Canada and the EEC countries. It was noted in Havana that developing countries have already accumulated debts to the volume of 300 billion dollars, and that international financial bodies and private banks had «raised their interest rates and imposed shorter terms of loan amortization, thus strangling the developing countries financially» (15). Food dependency will deepen these debts whose interest repayments alone will deepen the food crisis by siphoning off funds which could have been invested into agricultural development. With greater dependency and social and political vulnerability it will be increasingly difficult for African states to contribute their will to the fundamental issue of achieving the New International Economic Order through among other things achieving «linking the prices of their export items with prices of the basic equipment, industrial products and technological raw materials and technology that they import from the developing countries», the absence of which now means that «the product of one hour's work in the developed countries is exchanged for the product of ten hours' work in the underdeveloped countries (16). Already the new American government under REAGAN has announced its intention to use food as a vicious tool of American diplomacy, and for Africa with the urgent agenda for the decolonization of Namibia and the destruction of the *apartheid* system of exploitation and massive internal slavery in South Africa, this could also mean the possible barter of African blood and freedom for American cornflakes in the 1980s.

The blocking of the internal evolution of African agriculture and the consequent deepening food underdevelopment that will follow from it will constitute the *institutionalization* and intensification of the last five

hundred years of the underdevelopment of African agriculture and its food sector. It will therefore mean the deepening of the crisis of population malnourishment, and degeneration of the population by high infant mortality rates and early-age body exhaustion, waste and death. For this population is not only starved of food but also starved of energy; cannibalizing its own muscle power in walking thousands of kilometers a year in fetching water from distant wells, collecting firewood, going to farms and walking bullocks up and down in the act of ploughing (where this is done); walking to and from markets; walking loads, harvests, and merchandize carried on backs or heads; walking to government locations; walking across swamps, forests, savannas and deserts in migration and search for life. This auto-cannibalization also marks most processes of production: using muscles to split firewood; to pound yam and thresh millet or sorghum; to fell trees, grasses and dig soils; using muscles to grind cereals and transport water, etc.. (And all this because over five hundred years of invasion and underdevelopment of African rural economies stifled the growth of an industrialization process that would have harnessed electricity and other forms of fuel and mechanical energy. This starved, diseased, and self-cannibalizing population is hardly an ocean of power in which (according to Mao) African actors in international diplomacy can swim and play the guerilla. This is an infesting ocean of African weakness, whose population statistics of 400 million undernourished illiterates are in a losing confrontation of creativity, invention and human productivity against their exploiters and the populations of the developed countries. CASTRO was touching on this problem when he thundered with the collective anger of the Non-Aligned peoples at the UN thus:

«Why should some people go barefoot so that others may ride in expensive cars? Why should some live only 35 years so others may live 70? ... Some, are so glutted with machinery and factories that you cannot even breathe the air of their poisoned atmosphere; others have only their emaciated arms with which to earn their bread» (17).

CONCLUSION

The OAU needs Food Power based inside the stomachs of the African peoples, and animating that population into greater heights of creative action and productivity. To do this it must prevent the balkanization of African agriculture by TNCS and stop the deteriorating terms of trade between the peasant sector and the industrialized and urbanized sector.

One way of doing it is by the creation of a Pan-African institution for agricultural production, food processing and distribution. Such an institution would aim at pre-empting a food-production program proposed by the World Bank, possibly through FAO, under the current slogan of «meeting basic human needs», which would be a disguise for African agricultural initiative controlled and financed by TNCS (18). Rather, this would be an African financed institution that would mobilize funds, planning, management and extension resources for mobilizing production by

peasant farmers individually and in collectives. It would then purchase, store, and market them across Africa from an AFRICAN FOOD BANK according to zones of scarcity and climatic specialization. The mobilization of peasant production by the AFRICAN FOOD ORGANIZATION (AFO) would be done as the African Food «Marchal Plan» – injecting billions of Naira into the hands of this African peasantry who in the last five hundred years has only known permanent haemorrhage by being brutalized, exploited and expropriated (19). For it is the power, the inert power of the millions of African peasants animated in moments of creativity, construction and production, that will save African diplomacy from alimentary constipation because of Food Imperialism by TNCS.

NOTES

1. Jose H. Rodrigues, *Brazil and Africa*, University of California Press, 1965, p. 94.
2. I. R. Phimister, «Meat and Monopolies: Beef Cattle in Southern Rhodesia, 1890–1938», *Journal of African History*, 3, 1978, p. 397.
3. Jean Suret-Canale, *French Colonialism in Tropical Africa 1900–1945*, C. Hurst & Co. London 1971, p. 202.
4. In many parts of West Africa, Eastern Africa, Zaire and Angola, cassava replaced certain cereals like millet whose cultivation, weeding and harvesting required labour which had now been expropriated away to mines and European plantations. Diets predominantly made of cassava often caused blindness.
5. Rodrigues, *op. cit.*, p. 268.
6. Rene Dumont, *False Start in Africa*, Dumont reported with outraged disgust, the importation of bottled mineral water into countries like Senegal, Morocco, Ivory Coast by the African elite soon after independence.
7. Dan Morgan, *Merchants of Grain*, The Viking Press, N.Y. 1979, p. 9.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 170.
9. «In the Philippines Today, Jesus is a Worker on a Banana Plantation», *Struggle for the Sharing of Wealth and Power*, *Bulletin* 2, Winter 1980, pp. 14–15.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 127.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 128.
12. Susanne Cronje, *et. al.*, *LONRHO: Portrait of a Multinational*, London, 1976, pp. 38–89.
13. Wyne A. Selcher, *The Afro-Asian Dimension of Brazilian Foreign Policy 1956–1921*, University Press of Florida, 1974, p. 27.
14. *Daihx Sketch*, February 6, 1981.
15. Fidel Castro, October 12, 1979, *Speech to 34th Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations*, Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, Cuba 1979, p. 40. It is estimated that around 40 billion dollars a year to servicing these debts.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
17. *Ibid.*
18. See John H. Bryant, «WHO's Program of Health for All by the Year 2000: A Macrosystem for Health Policy-Making – A challenge to Social Science Research», *Social Science & Medicine*, October, 1980.
19. The link between this massive exploitation and hunger in Asia, Africa and Latin America is treated in Josue de Castro, *The Geography of Hunger*; Also see Margaret Haswell, *The Nature of Poverty*, MacMillan, 1975.

RESUME

La manipulation par les grandes puissances des politiques alimentaires des pays sous-développés à des fins purement politiques n'a pas toujours reçu l'attention qu'elle mérite. Ce n'est que récemment, à la suite de la crise que traverse l'économie mondiale que le problème de la nourriture se pose avec une si grande acuité. C'est dans ce cadre qu'il faut placer cette présente étude. Cet article se compose de deux grandes parties.

Dans la première partie l'auteur fait une description du secteur agricole vivrier avant et après la colonisation. Dans la deuxième partie il analyse l'actuel impérialisme alimentaire en Afrique. Pour l'auteur, l'intervention des colons dans le secteur agricole vivrier se caractérisait d'abord par la violence et la mort. Ce fut notamment le cas lorsqu'il a fallu envoyer des esclaves africains travailler dans les plantations aux Antilles, au Brésil et en Amérique, privant ainsi l'Afrique d'une partie importante de sa main-d'oeuvre agricole. Cette période d'esclavage fut suivie par celle de la colonisation territoriale, essentiellement marquée par une désorganisation totale de la production et de l'industrie agricole. Des effets de ces interventions résulta un déséquilibre international dans lequel la main-d'oeuvre exportée aux Amériques et aux Caraïbes servit à créer une civilisation et un développement agricole basé sur une agriculture de plantation. Son exportation marqua aussi le début du déclin de l'agriculture africaine. La faiblesse de l'agriculture vivrière de l'Afrique a attiré l'attention des fondateurs de l'Organisation de l'Unité Africaine qui a mis sur pied une commission chargée d'étudier ce problème. L'impérialisme alimentaire en Afrique trouve son origine dans ce déséquilibre décrit plus haut, déséquilibre qui a facilité la pénétration de l'agriculture africaine par les entreprises multinationales. Ces entreprises multinationales ont mis en marche des mécanismes de manipulations de l'agriculture africaine à leur profit, manipulations dont les conséquences sont désastreuses pour l'agriculture vivrière africaine — L'auteur fait ensuite remarquer que la faiblesse de l'agriculture vivrière africaine tient aussi à des facteurs internes. L'un des facteurs internes majeurs est la conception plutôt chauvine et individualiste de l'agriculture par les autorités africaines face à la vue globale qu'en ont les impérialistes et entreprises multinationales.

Dans tous les cas la persistance de la crise alimentaire africaine ne peut conduire qu'à une position de faiblesse plus marquée sur l'échiquier diplomatique international. KISSINGER n'avait-il pas déjà, dès 1975, utilisé la politique de déstabilisation par crise alimentaire en Egypte pour obliger SADAT à signer les accords de paix avec Israël ? L'émergence de l'Afrique en tant qu'«Organisation d'Etats Africains Mendiant la nourriture» ne peut conduire qu'à une profonde vulnérabilité de l'Afrique et à l'affaiblissement de l'OUA en tant que force diplomatique africaine.